

My name is Arlo Skari; I farm with my family north of Chester near the Sweetgrass Hills. My wife and I are members of the Farmers Union and the farm is a member of the Montana Grain Growers. I also served on the Liberty County Conservation District for 12 years; I felt it was a very important job.

WE had cattle for 25 years or so but got out a couple of decades ago because of the difficulties of summering cattle a long way from home.

Although I am usually with the cattleman on many issues, I find I cannot support this resolution, SJR 19, which is to raise the status of cattle grazing on one of our premier Wild Life Refuges, the CMR. Since this is a WR, the wildlife must have priority over that of domestic cows, not that cattle can't be a part of the management policy, but where and how long they graze is up to the manager of the Refuge. He cannot be shackled by concerns of providing sufficient grazing for cattle when his charge is wildlife management.

We have participated in the FWP upland game bird enhancement program for the last 12 years on a 160 acre tract that straddles two ephemeral streams and is an excellent wildlife area in an otherwise gently rolling prairie. We are mandated to pasture or hay $\frac{1}{4}$ of it every year which means that every 4 years we will have pastured or hayed the entire

tract. Actually, every 3 years would have been more appropriate and we have generally hayed the areas.

Although the deer use the area for birthing and also hiding from hunters, they do not graze as much as we thought because the area is surrounded by green wheat fields.

Therefore, we now have to begin leasing it out to a cowman as it needs more grazing pressure on that $\frac{1}{4}$ for that particular year. So in this situation, cattle are part of the grazing system but then we as managers can order the cattle off at any time when their job is done so to speak.

We have another tract of grazing land, about 320 acres, again straddling a creek. We lease this out to a neighbor every other year. He is a fine gentleman and a good cattleman, but he apparently does not fully understand grass as we have to tell him explicitly when the time comes to remove the cattle. I must commend the Conservation Districts on their emphasis on good grazing practices. I have attended many a session on that topic.

So than good managers, whether on cattle ranches or Wildlife Refuges must do what they have to do to preserve the area for its intended purpose and in this case it is the preservation of wildlife.

The existence of noxious weed infestation is listed in the Resolution. That is a serious problem but likely not necessarily connected to wildlife management anymore than cattle grazing management. We had a serious infestation of Spotted Knapweed upstream from us in the Sweetgrass Hills. This was due to a quarry operation for rip-rap when they were building Tiber Dam in the fifties. It was ignored until about 8 years ago when a concerted effort by several agencies, including the Liberty County Weed Board, the Bureau of Reclamation, the BLM and private landowners have finally brought this 100 acre very rugged landscape under control. They used herbicides with backpack & helicopter spraying and even pulling. It may have to be attended to in perpetuity. The Sweetgrass Hills are not a Wildlife Refuge so it can happen in primarily cattle grazing areas.

The cattle industry is as everybody knows, is a very important in this state; it supplies more value than any other industry. But, counties need something else to hold and attract people to their towns and one of the great attractions, especially in eastern Montana is wildlife and outdoor recreation. The CMR Refuge is just one of these areas. Let's keep it pristine.

Thank you,

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